

**TOWN OF JAMESTOWN  
INFORMATION ABOUT BALLOT QUESTION #3**

**Question 3.**

**AMENDMENT TO THE JAMESTOWN TOWN CHARTER**

(Approved by the Jamestown Town Council on May 4, 2020)

Section 219: Initiative and Referendum

Shall the Charter of the Town of Jamestown be amended to revise the process and requirements by qualified electors of the Town to use the initiative procedure?

0 Approve

0 Reject.

EXPLANATION

Question 3 on the ballot asks whether you approve or reject the proposed changes to Section 219 of the Jamestown Charter regarding Initiative and Referendum Procedures. These changes were recommended to the Town Council by a Charter Review Committee that was established in March 2019. If adopted, these changes would provide additional guidance about who can bring petitions, how the petitions are processed and evaluated, and whether and how initiative petitions are presented to the voters for consideration.

Among the proposed changes are:

- Who may bring a petition. The amendment provides that a petition committee of five qualified Jamestown electors may commence a petition, and sets out a process by which that may occur. The current Charter says only that the voters of Jamestown may initiate legislative proposals.
- Notification to the Town Council. Under the proposed amendment, the Town Clerk would notify the Town Council when (s)he receives a proposed ordinance from a petition committee. This is not a requirement under the Charter now.
- Contents of the Petition. The amendment provides that the Town Clerk will provide uniform petition blanks to the petition committee, and that the full text of the proposed ordinance must appear on each petition blank. This is not currently required.
- Time to file completed petition. Under the proposed amended Charter, the completed petition with signatures would have to be filed within 120 days after the petition committee receives the blanks from the Town Clerk. The Charter currently does not impose a time limit for submission of a completed petition.
- Requirements for collection of signatures. The amendment requires that each person who signs the petition must have read the ordinance or had it read to them, and that each signer understands and supports the proposed ordinance. This isn't required under the existing Charter.
- Petition circulators. If amended, the Charter would require persons who circulated the petition for signatures to submit an affidavit attesting to the number of signatures on each petition and other information about each person who signed, including the circumstances of the signing. This is not a requirement under the exiting Charter.
- Number of signatures required. If the amendment is approved, an initiative petition would be required to contain signatures from a minimum of 12% of the number of persons registered to vote at the last regular town election. Under the current Charter, the requirement is 10%.

- Town Clerk determines number and validity of signatures. If the amendment is adopted, the Town Clerk would determine the number and validity of signatures on a submitted petition in accordance with general guidance in amended Section 219 about how that determination should be made. The current Charter provisions are silent about how validity of a signature is established.
- Process after certification. If the Charter amendment is adopted, the Town Clerk would certify a petition when (s) he determines that it contained enough valid signatures, and the Clerk would forward the certified petition to the Town Council. The Town Council would then have 60 days to consider whether to adopt the ordinance. Under the current Charter, the Town Council must consider and vote on whether to adopt the proposed ordinance within 30 days.
- Submission to Voters, Referendum. Under the proposed Charter amendment, if the Town Council does not adopt the proposed ordinance within 60 days without a change in substance, the petition committee must request that the matter be submitted for a referendum vote within 30 days after that in order to get the matter submitted to the electors for approval or rejection in an election. Under the current Charter, the matter is automatically submitted to the electors at an election if the Council fails to adopt the proposed ordinance without a change in substance within 30 days of receiving it. This change was recommended to avoid the automatic submission of a matter for an election, in the event that that the petition committee had not forwarded the matter, to the voters for consideration.
- Withdrawal of Petitions. The proposed Charter amendments provides a procedure by which the petition committee could withdraw its petition to have the matter brought to the voters at an election. Under the current Charter, once the matter is automatically set for a referendum vote at an election because the Town Council failed to act to adopt it within 30 days, it cannot be withdrawn.

TO REVIEW THE FULL TEXT OF BOTH THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SECTION 219 AND THE CURRENT TEXT OF SECTIONS 218, 219, and 220, PLEASE VISIT THIS WEBSITE:

<http://www.jamestownri.gov/residents/jamestown-news>